Bulletin
of the Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club Inc.

Oct. 1995, Number 280
Editor; Don Hird.

The Tasmanian Field Naturalists Club encourages the study of natural history and supports conservation. We issue our journal, the *Tasmanian Naturalist*, annually in October. People with a range of backgrounds and knowledge are welcome as members.
Contact Don Hird (344 293) for further excursion details or more information, or write to GPO Box 68A Hobart, 7001.

Program
General meetings start at 7.45pm on the first Thursday of the month in the Life Science Building at the University of Tasmania. Outings are usually held the following Saturday or Sunday, meeting at 10am outside the main entrance to the Museum in MacQuarie Street. If you're attending an outing but not the meeting prior, check as to the timing of the excursion; sometimes unforeseen late changes occur.

2 November	**Penguins.** Sally Bryant and Mark Holdsworth from Parks, Wildlife and Heritage will speak about the biology of fairy penguins in Tasmania. Nick Mooney will summarise the recovery effort following the Tamar oil spill earlier this year, including its effects on local penguin colonies.
4 November	7 p.m. Meet at the Museum to travel to Marion Bay for an evening excursion which will include observing the penguins changing nest roster duties, trapping for insects and small mammals inhabiting the beach and dunes, and studying the prey of hooded plover. We plan to have a Barbeque meal at the Marion Bay carpark from around 7.45p.m. with the activities to follow into the evening. The tides and moon should favour our planned activities. At least some people will stay over to examine overnight results the next morning; bring camping gear, midnight supper and breakfast etc. if you plan to do this.
7 December	Jeff Campbell from **Launceston Field Naturalists** will speak about their property *Skemp's* and its environs to whet our appetite for the weekend outings. Bring a plate of Xmas supper.
8 / 10 December	North eastern weekend, based around Skemp's. See details on page 3.
January 1996	NO GENERAL ACTIVITIES.
1 February	We are hoping to arrange a speaker and excursion around the subject of Tasmanian Seaweeds. Watch for details in January Bulletin.
22-24 March	Federation Weekend at Maria. See details on page 3.

New Members. Welcome to Huon Valley naturalists Sue and Melanie Lovell.

1996 Subs

Subscriptions are payable for the calendar year in advance, unchanged from 1995 at :

Junior / Concession	$15-00
Adult	$20-00
Family	$25-00
Naturalist Sub. (Australia)	$14-00
Naturalist Sub. (Library)	$18-00
Naturalist Sub. (Overseas)	$22-00

Members automatically receive the *Naturalist*.

BRIGHT YELLOW SOUTH WEST NEMERTEAN

The report of a sighting of a Nemertean Worm at a recent Field outing to Bermuda Hill reminded me of the excitement I felt when my sister and I saw our first specimen two years ago (1993) on the South Coast Range while walking the South West Coast track. The unsegmented worm-like creature was using its proboscis to drag itself along a root which protruded from the mud. Within a few minutes it had powerfully climbed several metres up the rough bark of a tree. Our specimen was bright yellow, in contrast to the pink colouring of the Bermuda Hill specimen.

Intrigued with the creature, I discovered the following facts when I returned home. With their sticky proboscis Nemerteans trap small invertebrates which pass by, then stab the prey with a sharp 'stylet' on the end of the proboscis, before sucking out its soft insides.

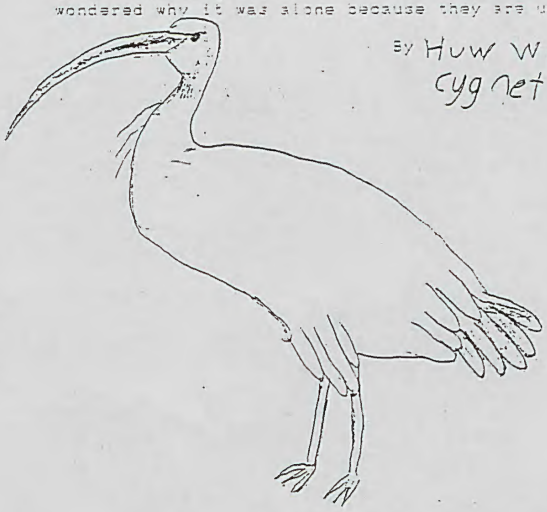
Owen Wilkins, Cygnet.

SACRED IBIS !

Did you see the Sacred Ibis (Threskiornis molucca) at Electrona ? It was in a marshy paddock from 30 sept to 9 oct in the late afternoons. There were 2 pacific gulls, 2 black swans, and a few ducks with it. It was jabbing its long black curved beak into the short moist grass.

A book I read about Ibis said they eat grasshoppers and lots of insect pests which would cause problems if there were no ibis.

I wondered why this Ibis was at Electrona because this is their breeding season. and they breed on the Mainland. I wondered why it was alone because they are usually in flocks.



By Huw Wilkins.
Cygnet

Tas FieldNats Conservation Policy

As foreshadowed in the July Bulletin, a draft policy is before the committee. We hope to include a revised policy in the January Bulletin for members' comment.

***Skemp's* Weekend Details.**

Friday 8th December -: arrive from 6 p.m., see map. Travelling time from Hobart about 2 1/2 - 3 hours from Hobart.

Saturday -: Depart Skemp's 9 a.m. Phil Collier (author of alpine plants of Tasmania Plant Identikit) will guide us around botanical features of Ben Lomond National Park; alpine wildflowers should be at their best. A special attraction is *Chionohebe ciliolata* on Hamilton Crags, only known location outside New Zealand. We hope the weather will be kind. National Park fees will apply. We have invited Launceston members to join us. Spotlighting in the evening -bring spotlight and / or torch.

Sunday -: Launceston members will show us around their property including native plantings. BBQ for lunchtime, BYO everything.

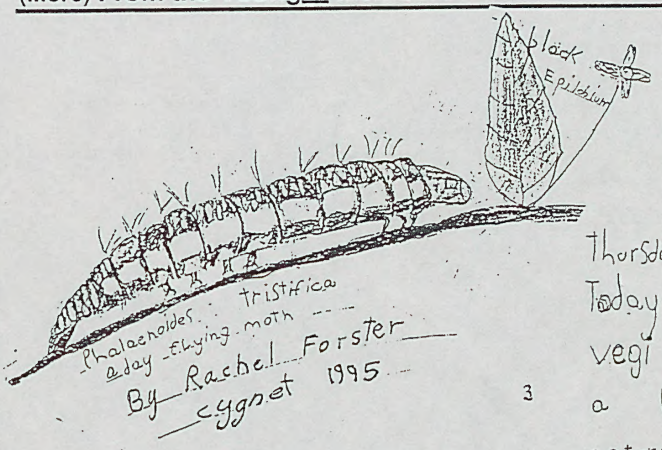
Accommodation is available in bunks - cost $7- per adult per night or $3- per child per night plus $2- annual membership fee. Camping is $5- per adult per night or $1- per child per night plus $2- annual membership fee. The centre has full cooking facilities including microwave, fridge, cutlery etc. You will need to bring sleeping bags / bed linen, pillows and all food, there is no shop nearby. Please book with Sue Collier (296 597) by 7 December. First come, first served basis for bunks in the hut. There is plenty of camping. Bring warm clothes and good footwear.

***Forward Notice* - Maria Island Federation Weekend ; March 22-24 1996.**

Our club is hosting the next Federation of Tasmanian Field Naturalists Clubs Meeting. Accommodation is available in the penitentiary or camping. Return ferry fare is $19, if we have 20 plus people travelling together we may be able to arrange a special charter on the Friday evening. There will also be a 9a.m. ferry to Maria at this time of year.

Maria is a wonderful venue for natural history, particularly birding and geology. We hope to have a guest speaker who specialises in the area. Pencil the dates in your diary and watch this space for further info. We are hoping for a good turnout from our club. Further details Sue Collier (296 597).

(More) From the Younger Members



Thursday the 26th of January Today I was weeding our vegi garden when I saw a beautiful yellow and caterpillar munching leaves.

Outing Reports

South Cape Bay, 8 October 1995

Despite an early start, a long drive and dubious weather, the South Cape Bay walk (postponed from April) still attracted an impressive turnout of 21, including five interstate visitors.

The walk from Cockle Creek to South Cape Ray is about 5 1/2km long, and took us about 1 1/2 hours each way. Along the way the track passes through a good range of habitats, starting in low, scrubby eucalypt forest and passing through a small section of swamp forest before opening out into scrubby buttongrass plains. Close to South Cape bay there are three unusual "rainforest" (teatree/laurel/ manfern) gullies growing on sand. The very last section down to the bay is an area of black shale on which virtually nothing grows.

Orchids were one obvious highlight, with eight species being more or less in flower, of which *Acianthus caudatus* was by far the commonest. The most spectacular was a spider orchid which was probably a pale form of *Caladenia caudata*, although it was not typical. The others were *Pterostylis nutans*, *P. pedunculata*, aff. *tunstallii* (formerly *longifolia*), *nana*, *Caladenia* aff. *alpina* (the "lowland" form) and *Prasophyllum brevilabre*. Several more were in bud. A purple *Euphrasia* was abundant across the buttongrass sections.

At least two ground parrots were seen. As is typical of the species they did not fly very far when disturbed. It was, however, a quiet day for reptiles, amphibians and mammals, with the most interest coming from a piece of reptile skin found in an owl scat.

Invertebrates were surprisingly scarce in the early sections although there were some good finds in the teatree/laurel gullies at the end of the walk. These included a large carabid beetle and the rare snail Roblinella curacoae (20th known locality.)

The track, although a little muddy in places, has been extensively boardwalked and is not as soggy as it once was. As a result it is a level and quite easy walk, and despite the variation in ages represented, we all got there and back with surprisingly little variation in time taken.

Kevin Bonham

FEDERATION REPORT Golden Valley 22-4 September 1995

Owing to a communications breakdown, the weekend was poorly attended, with only 8 delegates and one rufous wallaby present. This did, however, make for a pleasantly short business meeting! The weekend was held at Camp Quamby, which is on the side of Quamby Bluff, surrounded by wet eucalypt forest which, although degraded, revealed a good invertebrate fauna. Side outings were held to Liffey Falls, where we walked up to the Liffey River crossing, and the Central Plateau, where we viewed the quarantine zone surrounding Pine Lake. On Saturday I joined the Deloraine Field Nats and the Herpetological Society on a frog excursion to the top of the Gog Range. The presentation on Saturday night was by Dick James from the host club, Launceston Walking Club. He showed some slides from their well-known slide show and gave an interesting discussion of the logistics of running such a large club.

The meeting on Sunday morning resolved that the Federation object to the use of park entry fees for the "bronze whale" sculpture at Cockle Creek. We also voted to support the complete protection of the Chappell Island tiger snake, a distinct subspecies which is threatened by poaching and an apparently ambitious land claim.

I found the Quamby Bluff area an interesting one for invertebrates, In 5 hours searching over two days I found an outstanding 14 species of snail, although many well-known large species were not among these. Other finds included numerous scorpions, a few velvetworms and an enormous black flatworm I'd like to thank Dick James from LWC for organising the weekend, Nick Cummings from DFNG for transport on Sunday, and particularly the Tas FieldNats committee for agreeing to pay my travel costs for the weekend.

Kevin Bonham.

(More) Outing Reports

Howden Seashore Excursion, September 1995.

Of all the habitat types visited by naturalists and others, the rocky shore is one where many of the local animals and plants are on show, at least around low tides. This, together with Australia's legendary cultural association with the beach, has resulted in many guidebooks to one or more features of shore life. Perhaps the doyen of these, since the 1950's, has been Dakin's *Australian Seashores*, later edited by Isobel Bennett. (Angus and Robertson Publishers, very reasonably priced for a production of its standard).

Thus armed (but also with Judy Sprent's field library of other guides) we approached Howden Peninsula on a mild and sunny early-spring Saturday. The shore at the carpark where the road ends is a protected, low-energy coast, with small sandy bays interspersed with pebbly and boulder strewn sections and some sandstone rock shelves. We were essentially browsing (in the information, not culinary sense !) for shore life, we hadn't decided to focus on molluscs, crabs, algae or etc.

With around 20 people of whom half were observant children, specimens were quickly presented to the holders of books, lenses and trays. The shore crabs (family grapsidae) were identified primarily from a small Gould League guidebook, shell notches and patterns distinguish, for example the notched, mottled and purple shore crabs which live under rocks from where they are opportunist foragers. A more active crab was the smooth pebble crab, *Phylira laevis* (fam. Maiidae), a long-limbed wading crab with an almost spherical body. The remains of a little seaweed crab *Naxia sp.* with its algal camouflage intact was found amongst the flotsam at the tidemark. Another, non-crab, crustacean was a sea-louse *Isocladus sp.*

A frequent denizen of the crevices under rocks near or on sandy bottoms was a superficially crab-like crustacean with large chelae (nippers). This was identified from a crustacean guide to be a Half Crab, *Petrolisthes (? elongatus)*, fam. Porcellanidae. Obvious differences between these specimens and true (brachyuran) crabs included the presence of long, backswept antennae, three (not four) pairs of walking legs, and tail that, while tucked under the abdomen, was clearly more significant than that of the true crabs. Their enlarged nippers extend laterally, then fold forward onto themselves. Half crabs are more closely related to hermit crabs (Anomurans), and despite their fearsome appearance feed on particulate matter amongst sand grains. Howden specimens were a lustrous olive-green. A paradox was that no mention of this group appears in Dakin's book, while a popular crustacean guide referred to them as predominantly warm-temperate to tropical. I incidently looked for half crabs at Stewart's Bay, Port Arthur, some weeks later but instead found abundant isopods ("shore slaters") under rocks, but also just one beach-washed bright-blue porcellanid.

Several large polyclad (not a brand-name !) flatworms (around 5 X 1.5cm) were found clinging to the underside of rocks in the intertidal zone. The slow but methodical way in which these specimens righted themselves after the indignity of having their underside, with central mouth, inspected was intriguing. Their more normal gliding movements and active swimming abilities were also admired.

Amongst the molluscs, periwinkles, *Littorina sp.*, were common. Also seen were Ribbed Top Shells, *Austrocochlea constricta*, Noddywinks, *Bembicium nanum*, and the Lineated Cominella, *Cominella sp.* A small bivalve mollusc frequented the small tube-worm (*Galleolaria sp.*) colonies on loose boulders. The shell of a sand snail, *Conuber conicus*, was found on the beach. This is an incomplete sample of specimens found, although further comparison with the lists from Margaret Richmond's Shells of Tasmania would be worthwhile.

Sea dragons were found beached washed. Over lunch penguins were spotted surfacing in North-West River Bay. Also found under rocks were ribbon worms, (Phylum Nemertea), topical to members as an interesting terrestrial species was found in the southern forests earlier in the year.

A more interesting and enjoyable casual excursion would be hard to find. Reference to books, both in the field and as "homework" proved to be both valuable and at times frustrating. This is an area in which an accurate local guide would be a real asset, with educational merit. The problem with books like *Dakin* is that in attempting to summarise Australian biotas they have to skip some elements. The less diverse, cool temperate biotas away from major population centres are likely to be the least well covered, especially if there isn't or hasn't been commercial interest in them !

While we didn't attempt to quantify or obtain detailed zonation of our findings, a comparison of some biotas from similar and contrasting beaches would make an excellent project for those members with available time. Guidebooks are emerging, but again don't provide local detail; some are listed below.

(More) Outing Reports

Howden Seashore Excursion, continued.

Australian Seashores, Isobel Bennett & William Dakin, Angus and Robertson Publishers.
Tasmanian Seashells, Margaret Richmond, Devonport.
Coastal Invertebrates of Victoria : an Atlas of Selected Species, Marine Research Group, Victoria
Crustaceans of South Australia, H.M. Hale, 1927-29, Government Printer, South Australia.
Coastal Marine Ecology of Temperate Australia, A.J. Underwood, 1995, UNSW Press.
Seashore Ecology , T.H. Carefoot & R.D. Simpson, 1983, University of Queensland Press.
Biology of Intertidal Animals, R.C. Newell, 1970, Logos Press.
A Field Guide to the Crustaceans of Australian Waters, D.S. Jones & G.J. Morgan, 1994, UNSW Press.

Don Hird

Survey Group Report

In late October the Wildlife Survey group visited Glenelg, a Derwent Valley property which has retained a large block of remnant habitat of conservation value. Mammal survey only revealed an abundance of brushtails, including much evidence of the synchronised breeding season with several spotlighted animals carrying back-young. We also saw an apparently displaced individual seen in the daytime. There were diggings of bandicoots or bettongs but no further evidence at this stage, barred bandicoots are definitely known from the area. We found several bird species at nests, e.g. Green Rosellas, Spotted and Striated Pardalotes. Mt Spode was climbed for a fine Derwent Valley View.

Conservation in Tasmania : Costume Drama or Concerted Effort ?

Several of us who follow the tangled web of conservation lobbying have become concerned about the standard of representation of local issues and the level of dialogue between the various parties. A recent example is the annual woodchip licence process which soon degenerated into yet another slanging match and advertising battle, with each adversary apparently wanting an all-or-nothing result. I felt that the underlying principle for licences, reported to be a comprehensive and representative reserve system for each State concerned, had much potential for real conservation progress, especially in the biodiversity context; it is seldom difficult to find examples of inadequately reserved habitats or species, or of poorly known biotas. This concept, unfortunately, seemed to be blithely passed over by the most prominent combatants, possibly leading to so many informed people not joining the debate.

We have become used to big claims for and against conservation, indeed from the media one would believe that nothing else is at stake. Some say that because we have 20-something per cent of Tasmania reserved then any further claims are greedy; to accept this is to potentially sacrifice important unprotected elements of our natural heritage. From the other side, though, the commitment to dialogue and steady progress has been questionable with unexplained boycotts and some high-profile theatrics which seem unlikely to progress the issues. The Tarkine is undoubtedly of conservation value, but it is not the only (or arguably the highest) current priority. Its mode of promotion is a gift to those who like to portray conservation as largely the province of exhibitionists and extremists, who goad but don't fully discuss the issues. Quite why a new conservation organisation is required for each single issue is debatable, particularly as establishment of credibility takes time. Conservation has always been a broad movement, its better to accept and work with this diversity than make it a race for opportunists.

I've looked for but seen very little discussion of the principle of a comprehensive and representative reserve system in local media. A recent Mercury editorial waffled about its perceived acceptability to "reasonable conservationists" of further woodchip onslaught while the same edition accepted paid advertisements from the Forest Protection Society, a sham community group reported to receive $900 000 annually from the Forest Industries Association. Newspapers are also beneficiaries of cheap wood fibre. The 7.30 Report is happy to run footage of colourful Tarkine denizens making imaginative claims, but little of a more sophisticated context.

In NSW a recent change of government has meant more than 20 new national parks to partly remediate unprotected biodiversity. Programs to monitor threatened species and communities are funded in part by substantial levies on agencies exploiting natural resources. We have recently been advised that there will be no community consultation forum to supplement proposed Tasmanian Threatened Species Legislation, a break with an important and long-standing precedent. National policies are an enticing alternative, but local acceptance will always be important. A modicum of solidarity and discourse between local conservation advocates should come first.

Don Hird